

AN OVERVIEW

WASHINGTON'S CHILD SUPPORT PROGRAM



Washington State
Department of
Social & Health
Services

Division of Child Support

What is included in child support?

Financial support is an important part. Child support can also include medical insurance coverage and day care expenses.

Who can be affected by child support?

Almost everyone is touched by child support. Of course, children top the list. Perhaps you pay or receive child support. You may have a relative or friend who is affected by child support. It could be a neighbor or a co-worker. An employee or a customer may pay or receive support.

Why is child support important?

Children are our future. Financial and emotional support from their parents is important. Children need support even when one parent leaves the home.

This support can help give children a better chance at life. It can improve a child's living standard.

Children learn from what they see adults do. Seeing a parent give or receive support may encourage children to be equally responsible parents.

When parents don't pay child support, who pays the bill?

Sometimes one parent carries the entire responsibility. Often one parent can't do it alone. Sometimes public assistance can be temporary help. Then taxpayers carry the cost of supporting the children.

What is the Division of Child Support's role?

The Division of Child Support (DCS) is committed to providing effective child support services. Part of our mission is to help families avoid or break the cycle of poverty. DCS helps taxpayers by enforcing parents' financial responsibility for their children. DCS operates the Washington State Support Registry (WSSR). This is a central clearing house for payment processing.

Who is eligible for DCS services?

DCS provides services automatically when:

- A support order says the paying person should make support payments through WSSR.
- A child or children are in foster care.
- Public assistance is or has been paid for a child and one or both parents are absent from the child's home.

DCS also provides services to people who ask for them. Included are:

- A person who has physical custody of a dependent child and at least one parent is out of the child's home. There does not have to be an order for support.
- Any person who owes child support.
- Parents or caretakers who want to establish paternity for a dependent child.
- A person who had custody of a child and back support is owed under a support order.

What services does DCS offer to help children?

Payment Processing Services

DCS provides payment processing and records maintenance through the Washington State Support Registry (WSSR). WSSR gives parents a central payment location. Payment records are available to either parent.

Most child support orders entered in Washington State direct payments via WSSR. Payment processing may be the only service needed. Either person may request full collection services. The request must be in writing. Full collection services are provided when public assistance is paid for the child.

Establishment Services

Sometimes a support amount has not been set. DCS may establish an administrative child support order. When DCS establishes an order, parents have hearing rights.

Administrative orders may include various support requirements. Most orders require child support payments and medical insurance coverage for the child. These orders may also require payment of day care expenses. Either person can still go to court to get an order at any time. Administrative orders do not address access or visitation rights.

Sometimes the parents of a child were not married to each other when the child was born. They might have signed a paternity affidavit. If so, support may be set administratively. If not, paternity can be established in court. A county prosecuting attorney's office handles entry of a child support order and parenting plan.

For more information about establishing paternity, please contact your nearest DCS office. Ask for our paternity brochure. You may also ask to talk to someone about your questions.

Review and Modification Services

From time to time DCS reviews support orders for modification. Review may be done on any DCS case. No request is needed if a parent receives public assistance for the child. Parents receiving non-assistance support services may ask DCS to review their support order. This service is available to both parents. The review is based on both parties' income. The best available income information is used. Conducting a review does not mean that the order will be changed.

Collection Services

Once support has been set administratively or by a court, DCS can enforce the current and past due child support. At the same time, we can collect daycare expenses and spousal support. Unpaid medical expenses and interest on unpaid support can sometimes be included. Sometimes expenses or interest must be set as a court judgment before DCS can collect.

How does DCS enforce child support orders?

- DCS enforcement services may include all or some of the following:
- Withholding up to 50% of net income.
- Withholding up to 50% of Unemployment Compensation Benefits.
- Withholding up to 50% of Labor and Industries monthly disability payments.
- Withholding up to 100% of permanent or partial disability payments.
- Attaching bank and other accounts.
- Intercepting federal income tax refunds.
- Filing liens against real and personal property.
- Enrolling children in employer provided health insurance plans.
- Seizing vehicles and other property.
- Referring cases to county prosecutors for contempt proceedings.
- Suspending various state-issued licenses.
- Seizing lottery winnings over \$600.
- Denying Passport Renewal.
- Reporting Child Support Debts to Credit Bureaus.
- Posting delinquent parents to an Internet Most Wanted Web Site.

Location Services

DCS may be able to help a custodial parent locate the other parent. This service is offered to establish, enforce, or modify a support order. If there is no case with DCS, call (360) 664-5000 or at 1-800-442-5437.

Request an application for locate services. If there is already a case, contact the DCS field office assigned to your case. A list of field offices is at the end of this booklet.

Interstate Collection Services

When one of the parents lives in another state, DCS may:

- Attach the obligated parent's wages or bank account in another state. An employer or bank account must first be identified.
- Ask the state where the obligated parent lives to collect for us.
- Accept collection requests from other states. This is when the obligated parent lives in Washington.
- Open a case at the request of a parent living in another state.
- File a claim to collect from a federal income tax refund.

Interstate collection may take more time. Some states may have limitations that make the process more difficult. DCS is working with other states to make the collection process between states work faster and better.

Although Washington provides free child support services, the other state might charge you fees for certain services.

For specific information about Interstate Collection, call your local DCS office. Ask for the Across State Lines brochure.

What resources does DCS have to find information about a non-custodial parent?

DCS matches information about the noncustodial parent with many data sources. Below we list just a few of our sources:

- Department of Licensing.
- Reporting by Washington and other state's employment security.
- Reports by employers when they hire new employees.
- Financial Institution reporting.
- Department of Revenue.

Are there services DCS does not provide?

Yes. DCS cannot:

- Enforce property settlements.
- Decide custody disputes.
- Enforce access and visitation provisions of an order.
- Collect attorney's fees.

How does a person apply for services?

- When the custodian receives public assistance from Washington State for the child, DCS is already working for them. A new application is not needed.
- When the custodian does not receive public assistance from Washington State for the child, the parent or custodian can apply for services. These services are available even if the parent or custodian lives in another state. Washington provides its child support services at no charge.

A written request is needed. To request an application for support enforcement services call 1-800-442-KIDS.

How can I help DCS establish or enforce my child support order?

You can help DCS by giving information when you have it.

- From time to time DCS may ask for more recent information. The request is usually about the other parent's address or employer.
- Give DCS all the information asked for on the application.
- Give DCS all requested information about the parent. The request may be via phone call or a form.
- Inform DCS of any changes in custody or residence of the children.
- Inform DCS of any changes in the parent's address, employer, or assets.

- Provide the non-custodial parent's correct Social Security Number.
- Provide a copy of all related child support orders, when you have a DCS case.
- Give DCS clear and complete payment information.

DCS staff members want to help each family. They want to help as efficiently and as completely as possible. You can help us do this by limiting case-related calls and correspondence to urgent questions and new information.

You can obtain current payment information without talking to a representative. Call 1-800-442-KIDS on your touch tone phone. You must have your case number to access your case information.

How long does it take before payments start?

The length of time depends on several things. If there is no child support order, one will have to be established. Sometimes DCS is able to enforce an order within the first month. Other times it takes much longer. Sometimes we may be unsuccessful because the obligated parent:

- Moves and the new address is unknown.
- Changes jobs often.
- Lives in another state and does not have assets DCS can attach.
- Lives in a country without a joint collection agreement.
- Uses aliases or hides assets in another person's name.
- Is on public assistance or supplemental security income (SSI) or has no assets.
- Disputes the obligation and seeks relief through a court or an administrative forum.
- Is in jail, work release, or a drug/alcohol rehabilitation center.

What if the obligated parent lives on an Indian Reservation or is employed by a tribe, tribal enterprise or an Indian-owned business located on a reservation or trust land?

DCS does not have authority to attach on-reservation assets and income without tribal consent but DCS may attach off-reservation assets and income.

There are 29 Native American Tribes in Washington State which are recognized as independent, sovereign governments with similar status as other states and foreign nations. Federally recognized tribes have exclusive jurisdiction over their tribal members and tribal lands, unless restricted by the federal government.

DCS is working with tribes to obtain agreements establishing procedures for use of tribal courts to establish and enforce child support obligations on Indian reservations.

Persons with Disabilities:

If you need other special assistance (such as a sign language interpreter or alternate format materials) because of a disability, we can provide help free of charge.

If you would like more information, you may contact the DCS field office for your county. Each office handles one or more counties. The offices and counties are listed below. You may also visit our Internet web site.

The Internet address is <http://www.wa.gov/dshs/dcs/>

DCS Offices

Everett Field Office

5415 Evergreen Way, PO Box 4282
Everett, WA 98203-9282
Office Hrs.: 8:00a.m.-5:00p.m., Mon.-Fri.
Phone: (425) 438-4800 or (800) 729-7580
Fax: (425) 438-4879
TDD: (425)438-4939 or
1-800-241-9489
E-mail: everettdcs@dshs.wa.gov

Everett

Counties served: Island,
San Juan, Skagit,
Snohomish and Whatcom

Fife Field Office

P.O. Box 2950
Tacoma, WA 98401-2950
Office Hrs.: 8:00a.m.-5:00p.m., Mon.-Fri.
Phone: (253) 922-0454 or (866) 243-4449
Fax: (253) 926-0284
TTY: (866) 270-0832.
E-mail: imail_fif@dshsmg1.dshs.wa.gov

Fife

Counties served:
Pierce, King, Kitsap

Kennewick Field Office

500 N. Morain, #2210, PO Box 5550
Kennewick, WA 99336-0550
Office Hrs.: 8:00a.m.-5:00p.m., Mon.-Fri.
Phone: (509) 374-2000 or (800) 345-9981
Fax: (509) 734-7251
TDD: (509) 734-7267
E-mail: kennewick-dcs@dshs.wa.gov

Kennewick

Counties served: Benton,
Columbia, Franklin, and
Walla Walla

Olympia Field Office

6135 Martin Way, PO Box 9209
Olympia, WA 98507-9209
Office Hrs.: 8:00a.m.-5:00p.m., Mon.-Fri.
Phone: (360) 664-6900 or (800) 345-9964
TDD: (360) 438-8906
Fax: (360) 438-8520
E-mail: olympia-dcs@dshs.wa.gov

Olympia

Counties served: Clallam,
Grays Harbor, Jefferson,
Mason and Thurston

Seattle Field Office

500 First Avenue South
Seattle, WA 98104-2830
Office Hrs.: 8:00a.m.-5:00p.m., Mon.-Fri.
Phone: (206) 341-7000 or (800) 526-8658
Fax: (206) 464-7449
TDD: (206) 464-7851
E-mail: seattle-dcs@dshs.wa.gov

Seattle

Counties served: King

DCS Offices

Spokane Field Office

W. 1608 Boone, PO Box 2560
Spokane, WA 99220-2560
Office Hrs.: 8:00a.m.-5:00p.m., Mon.-Fri.
Phone: (509) 363-5000 or (800) 345-9982
Fax: (509) 456-4148
TDD: (509) 363-5080
E-mail: spokane-dcs@dshs.wa.gov

Spokane

Counties served: Asotin,
Ferry, Garfield, Lincoln,
Pend Oreille, Spokane,
Stevens and Whitman

Tacoma Field Office

2121 S. State Street, PO Box 1237
Tacoma, WA 98401-1237
Office Hrs.: 8:00a.m.-5:00p.m., Mon.-Fri.
Phone: (253) 597-3700 or (800) 345-9976
Fax: (253) 597-3725
TDD: (253) 593-9976
E-mail: tacoma-dcs@dshs.wa.gov

Tacoma

Counties served: Kitsap
and Pierce

Vancouver Field Office

5411 E. Mill Planin Blvd., Building 3
PO Box 4269
Vancouver, WA 98662-0269
Office Hrs.: 8:00a.m.-5:00p.m., Mon.-Fri.
Phone: (360) 696-6100 or (800) 345-9984
Fax: (360) 696-6491
TDD: (360) 690-4633
E-mail: vancouver-dcs@dshs.wa.gov

Vancouver

Counties served: Clark,
Cowlitz, Klickitat, Lewis,
Pacific, Skamania and
Wahkiakum

Wenatchee Field Office

515 Grant Road,
East Wenatchee, WA 98802. PO Box 2929
Wenatchee, WA 98807-2929
Office Hrs.: 8:00a.m.-5:00p.m., Mon.-Fri.
Phone: (509) 886-6800 or (800) 535-1113
Fax: (509) 886-6212
TDD: (509) 886-6833
E-mail: wenatchee-dcs@dshs.wa.gov

Wenatchee

Counties served: Adams,
Chelan, Douglas, Grant
and Okanogan

Yakima Field Office

1002 North 16th Avenue, PO Box 22510
Yakima, WA 98907
Office Hrs.: 8:00a.m.-5:00p.m., Mon-Fri
Phone: (509) 249-6000 or (800) 441-0859
Fax: (509) 576-3776
TDD: (509) 575-2675
E-mail: yakima-dcs@dshs.wa.gov

Yakima

Counties served: Kittitas
and Yakima



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